



U.S. Citizenship
and Immigration
Services

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BS

FILE:

Office: TEXAS SERVICE CENTER Date: OCT 16 2006

IN RE:

Petitioner:
Beneficiary:

PETITION: Immigrant Petition for Alien Worker as a Member of the Professions Holding an Advanced Degree or an Alien of Exceptional Ability Pursuant to Section 203(b)(2) of the Immigration and Nationality Act, 8 U.S.C. § 1153(b)(2)

ON BEHALF OF PETITIONER:

SELF-REPRESENTED

INSTRUCTIONS:

This is the decision of the Administrative Appeals Office in your case. All documents have been returned to the office that originally decided your case. Any further inquiry must be made to that office.

Mari Johnson

Robert P. Wiemann, Chief
Administrative Appeals Office

DISCUSSION: The Director, Texas Service Center, denied the employment-based immigrant visa petition, which is now before the Administrative Appeals Office (AAO) on appeal. The appeal will be dismissed.

The petitioner is a software developer. It seeks to employ the beneficiary permanently in the United States as a software engineer pursuant to section 203(b)(2) of the Immigration and Nationality Act (the Act), 8 U.S.C. § 1153(b)(2). In pertinent part, section 203(b)(2) of the Act provides immigrant classification to members of the professions holding advanced degrees or their equivalent and whose services are sought by an employer in the United States. As required by statute, the petition was accompanied by certification from the Department of Labor. The director determined that the petitioner had not established that it had the continuing ability to pay the beneficiary the proffered wage beginning on the priority date of the visa petition and denied the petition accordingly.

On appeal, the petitioner asserts that it is already paying the proffered wage and resubmits evidence already part of the record of proceeding. For the reasons discussed below, the petitioner has not established that it has paid the proffered wage as of the required date. Moreover, while not raised by the director, the evaluation of the beneficiary's education does not clearly establish that he qualifies as an advanced degree professional and meets the job requirements on the labor certification.

Ability to Pay the Proffered Wage

The regulation at 8 C.F.R. § 204.5(g)(2) states, in pertinent part:

Ability of prospective employer to pay wage. Any petition filed by or for an employment-based immigrant which requires an offer of employment must be accompanied by evidence that the prospective United States employer has the ability to pay the proffered wage. The petitioner must demonstrate this ability **at the time the priority date is established and continuing until the beneficiary obtains lawful permanent residence**. Evidence of this ability shall be in the form of copies of annual reports, federal tax returns, or audited financial statements.

(Bold emphasis added.) The petitioner must demonstrate the continuing ability to pay the proffered wage beginning on the priority date, the day the Form ETA 750 was accepted for processing by any office within the employment system of the Department of Labor. See 8 C.F.R. § 204.5(d). Here, the Form ETA 750 was accepted for processing on August 9, 2005. The proffered wage as stated on the Form ETA 750 is \$41 per hour, which amounts to \$85,280 annually or \$7,106.67 monthly. On the Form ETA 750B, signed by the beneficiary, the beneficiary claimed to have worked for the petitioner as of April 1, 2005.

On the petition, the petitioner claimed to have an establishment date in 1997, a "projected" gross annual income of \$2,000,000, a "projected" net income of \$500,000 and nine employees. In support of the petition, the petitioner submitted its quarterly wage and withholding report for the third quarter of 2005 reflecting that the beneficiary earned \$13,500 that quarter, page one of its Internal Revenue Service (IRS) Form 1120 U.S. Corporation Income Tax Return for the period September 1,

2003 through August 31, 2004 reflecting net income of \$8,047 and pay stubs for the beneficiary in April, May, June, July, August, September and November of 2005. Prior to November, all of the pay stubs reflect monthly earnings of \$4,500. In November of 2005, the petitioner began paying the beneficiary \$5,340 per month.

Because the director deemed the evidence submitted insufficient to demonstrate the petitioner's continuing ability to pay the proffered wage beginning on the priority date, on April 24, 2006, the director requested additional evidence pertinent to that ability. In accordance with 8 C.F.R. § 204.5(g)(2), the director specifically requested that the petitioner provide copies of annual reports, federal tax returns, or audited financial statements to demonstrate its continuing ability to pay the proffered wage beginning on the priority date.

In response, the petitioner submitted its IRS Form 1120 tax return for the period September 1, 2004 through August 31, 2005.

The tax return reflects the following information:

Net income	(\$85,624)
Current Assets	\$69,892
Current Liabilities	\$116,557
Net current assets	(\$46,665)

In addition, the Form W-2, Wage and Tax Statement the petitioner issued to the beneficiary in 2005 reflects wages of \$42,180. The petitioner also submitted its unaudited financial statements for April 2006 reflecting a net loss of \$6,338.69 from September 2005 through April 2006 and, apparently, a net income of \$5,485 in April 2006. The unaudited balance sheet as of April 30, 2006 reflects net current assets of (\$148,203.11).

The director determined that the evidence submitted did not establish that the petitioner had the continuing ability to pay the proffered wage beginning on the priority date, and, on June 6, 2006, denied the petition.

On appeal, the petitioner asserts that the petition is for "Future Employment," not "Current Employment," and that it has been paying the beneficiary the proffered wage. The petitioner lists the beneficiary's purported wages from January 2006 through June 2006. The petitioner notes that the wages on the Form W-2 do not cover the full year and that the beneficiary's monthly wages in June through September 2005 were \$4,500, not \$450 as stated by the director. Finally, the petitioner notes that it raised the beneficiary's wages to \$5,340 per month in November 2005 and asserts that it raised them again in January 2006. The petitioner resubmits pay stubs for the beneficiary covering June through September 2005. The petitioner does not submit the pay stubs for January through June 2006. Thus, the petitioner has not established that it paid the beneficiary between \$9,620 and \$14,992 per month during that period as claimed. Going on record without supporting documentary evidence is not sufficient for purposes of meeting the burden of proof in these proceedings. *Matter*

of Soffici, 22 I&N Dec. 158, 165 (Comm. 1998) (citing *Matter of Treasure Craft of California*, 14 I&N Dec. 190 (Reg. Comm. 1972)).

We acknowledge that the petition is for future employment. As quoted above, however, the regulation at 8 C.F.R. § 204.5(g)(2) requires the petitioner to establish the ability to pay at the time the priority date is established. As stated above, the priority date in this matter is August 9, 2005. Thus, the petitioner must establish that it had the ability to pay the proffered wage as of that date. *See also Matter of Great Wall*, 16 I&N Dec. 142 (Reg. Comm. 1977).

Where the petitioner has submitted the requisite initial documentation required in the regulation at 8 C.F.R. § 204.5(g)(2), Citizenship and Immigration Services (CIS) will first examine whether the petitioner employed and paid the beneficiary during the relevant period. If the petitioner establishes by documentary evidence that it employed the beneficiary at a salary equal to or greater than the proffered wage, the evidence will be considered *prima facie* proof of the petitioner's ability to pay the proffered wage. In the instant case, we concur with the director that the petitioner did not establish that it employed and paid the beneficiary the full proffered wage as of the priority date. Specifically, while the Form W-2 does not cover all of 2005, the pay stubs and third quarter quarterly report reflect that the beneficiary was earning \$4,500 per month from April through October and \$5,340 beginning in November 2005. As stated above, the monthly proffered wage is \$7,106.67. The difference between the wages paid and the proffered wage in April through October is \$2,606.67 per month or \$18,246.69 total for seven months, and the difference between the proffered wage in November and December and the wages paid is \$1,766.67 per month or \$3,533.34 total for two months. Thus, the total difference between the proffered wage and wages paid from April onward in 2005 is \$21,780.03.

If the petitioner does not establish that it employed and paid the beneficiary an amount at least equal to the proffered wage during that period, CIS will next examine the net income figure reflected on the petitioner's federal income tax return, without consideration of depreciation or other expenses. Reliance on federal income tax returns as a basis for determining a petitioner's ability to pay the proffered wage is well established by judicial precedent. *Elatos Restaurant Corp. v. Sava*, 632 F. Supp. 1049, 1054 (S.D.N.Y. 1986) (citing *Tongatapu Woodcraft Hawaii, Ltd. v. Feldman*, 736 F.2d 1305 (9th Cir. 1984)); *see also Chi-Feng Chang v. Thornburgh*, 719 F. Supp. 532 (N.D. Texas 1989); *K.C.P. Food Co., Inc. v. Sava*, 623 F. Supp. 1080 (S.D.N.Y. 1985); *Ubeda v. Palmer*, 539 F. Supp. 647 (N.D. Ill. 1982), *aff'd*, 703 F.2d 571 (7th Cir. 1983). Showing that the petitioner's gross receipts exceeded the proffered wage is insufficient. Similarly, showing that the petitioner paid wages in excess of the proffered wage is insufficient. In *K.C.P. Food Co., Inc. v. Sava*, 623 F. Supp. at 1084, the court held that the Immigration and Naturalization Service, now CIS, had properly relied on the petitioner's net income figure, as stated on the petitioner's corporate income tax returns, rather than the petitioner's gross income. The court specifically rejected the argument that the Service should have considered income before expenses were paid rather than net income.

Nevertheless, the petitioner's net income is not the only statistic that can be used to demonstrate a petitioner's ability to pay a proffered wage. If the net income the petitioner demonstrates it had available during that period, if any, added to the wages paid to the beneficiary during the period, if

any, do not equal the amount of the proffered wage or more, CIS will review the petitioner's assets. We reject, however, any argument that the petitioner's total assets should have been considered in the determination of the ability to pay the proffered wage. The petitioner's total assets include depreciable assets that the petitioner uses in its business. Those depreciable assets will not be converted to cash during the ordinary course of business and will not, therefore, become funds available to pay the proffered wage. Further, the petitioner's total assets must be balanced by the petitioner's liabilities. Otherwise, they cannot properly be considered in the determination of the petitioner's ability to pay the proffered wage. Rather, CIS will consider *net current assets* as an alternative method of demonstrating the ability to pay the proffered wage.

Net current assets are the difference between the petitioner's current assets and current liabilities.¹ A corporation's year-end current assets are shown on Schedule L, lines 1(d) through 6(d). Its year-end current liabilities are shown on lines 16(d) through 18(d). If a corporation's end-of-year net current assets are equal to or greater than the proffered wage, the petitioner is expected to be able to pay the proffered wage out of those net current assets.

The petitioner has not demonstrated that it paid the full proffered wage in 2005. From September 2004 through August 2005, the petitioner shows a net loss and negative net current assets. The petitioner has not, therefore, demonstrated the ability to pay the difference between the wages paid and the proffered wage out of its net income or net current assets. The petitioner has not demonstrated that any other funds were available to pay the proffered wage. The petitioner has not, therefore, shown the ability to pay the proffered wage during 2005.

The unaudited financial statements submitted in response to the director's request for additional evidence are not persuasive evidence. According to the plain language of 8 C.F.R. § 204.5(g)(2), where the petitioner relies on financial statements as evidence of a petitioner's financial condition and ability to pay the proffered wage, those statements must be audited. Unaudited statements are the unsupported representations of management. The unsupported representations of management are not persuasive evidence of a petitioner's ability to pay the proffered wage. Regardless, they show a net loss from September 2005 through April 2006 and negative net current assets as of April 30, 2006.

We acknowledge that the priority date is August 9, 2005 and that the petitioner need not demonstrate an ability to pay the proffered wage prior to that date. The petitioner paid the beneficiary only \$4,500 for three months after the priority date and \$5,340 for an additional two months. As stated above, the difference between these wages and the monthly proffered wage is \$2,606.67 per month and \$1,766.67 per month respectively. Thus, the total difference between the proffered wage and wages paid from August onward in 2005 is \$11,353.35 $((\$2,606.67 \times 3) + (\$1,766.67 \times 2))$.

¹ According to *Barron's Dictionary of Accounting Terms* 117 (3rd ed. 2000), "current assets" consist of items having (in most cases) a life of one year or less, such as cash, marketable securities, inventory and prepaid expenses. "Current liabilities" are obligations payable (in most cases) within one year, such accounts payable, short-term notes payable, and accrued expenses (such as taxes and salaries). *Id.* at 118.

We will not, however, consider 12 months of income towards an ability to pay a lesser period of the proffered wage any more than we would consider 24 months of income towards paying the annual proffered wage. CIS will prorate the proffered wage if the record contains evidence of net income or payment of the beneficiary's wages specifically covering the portion of the year that occurred after the priority date (and only that period). While we can determine the wages paid after the priority date as discussed above, the petitioner has not submitted evidence of its net income for the period of August 2005 through December 2005. Even if we accepted the unaudited financial statements, as stated above, they show a net loss from August 2005 through April 2006. Thus, prorating the proffered wage does not resolve the issue of the petitioner's ability to pay the proffered wage as of August 9, 2005.

Finally, as stated above, the petitioner has not submitted the pay stubs for 2006 confirming its claim to be currently paying the beneficiary the proffered wage.

The petitioner failed to submit evidence sufficient to demonstrate that it had the ability to pay the proffered wage during the salient portion of 2005 or subsequently during 2006. Therefore, the petitioner has not established that it had the continuing ability to pay the proffered wage beginning on the priority date.

The Beneficiary's Qualifications

Beyond the director's decision, the record also fails to establish that the beneficiary qualifies as an advanced degree professional or meets the job requirements set forth on the labor certification. An application or petition that fails to comply with the technical requirements of the law may be denied by the AAO even if the Service Center does not identify all of the grounds for denial in the initial decision. *See Spencer Enterprises, Inc. v. United States*, 229 F. Supp. 2d 1025, 1043 (E.D. Cal. 2001), *aff'd*, 345 F.3d 683 (9th Cir. 2003); *see also Dor v. INS*, 891 F.2d 997, 1002 n. 9 (2d Cir. 1989) (noting that the AAO reviews appeals on a *de novo* basis).

In pertinent part, section 203(b)(2) of the Act provides immigrant classification to members of the professions holding advanced degrees or their equivalent and whose services are sought by an employer in the United States. An advanced degree is a United States academic or professional degree or a foreign equivalent degree above the baccalaureate level. 8 C.F.R. § 204.5(k)(2). The regulation further states: "A United States baccalaureate degree or a foreign equivalent degree followed by at least five years of progressive experience in the specialty shall be considered the equivalent of a master's degree. If a doctoral degree is customarily required by the specialty, the alien must have a United States doctorate or a foreign equivalent degree." *Id.*

The beneficiary possesses two foreign three-year degrees. Thus, the issue is whether either degree is a foreign degree equivalent to a U.S. baccalaureate degree. We must also consider whether the beneficiary meets the job requirements of the proffered job as set forth on the labor certification.

Eligibility for the Classification Sought

As noted above, the ETA Form 9089 in this matter is certified by DOL. Thus, at the outset, it is useful to discuss DOL's role in this process. Section 212(a)(5)(A)(i) of the Act provides:

In general.-Any alien who seeks to enter the United States for the purpose of performing skilled or unskilled labor is inadmissible, unless the Secretary of Labor has determined and certified to the Secretary of State and the Attorney General that-

- (I) there are not sufficient workers who are able, willing, qualified (or equally qualified in the case of an alien described in clause (ii)) and available at the time of application for a visa and admission to the United States and at the place where the alien is to perform such skilled or unskilled labor, and
- (II) the employment of such alien will not adversely affect the wages and working conditions of workers in the United States similarly employed.

According to 20 C.F.R. § 656.1(a), the purpose and scope of the regulations regarding labor certification are as follows:

(a) Under section 212(a)(5)(A) of the Immigration and Nationality Act (INA or Act) (8 U.S.C. 1182(a)(5)(A)), certain aliens may not obtain immigrant visas for entrance into the United States in order to engage in permanent employment unless the Secretary of Labor has first certified to the Secretary of State and to the Secretary of Homeland Security that:

- (1) There are not sufficient United States workers who are able, willing, qualified and available at the time of application for a visa and admission into the United States and at the place where the alien is to perform the work; and
- (2) The employment of the alien will not adversely affect the wages and working conditions of United States workers similarly employed.

It is significant that none of the above inquiries assigned to DOL, or the remaining regulations implementing these duties under 20 C.F.R. § 656, involve a determination as to whether or not the alien is qualified for a specific immigrant classification or even the job offered. This fact has not gone unnoticed by Federal Circuit Courts.

There is no doubt that the authority to make preference classification decisions rests with INS. The language of section 204 cannot be read otherwise. See *Castaneda-Gonzalez v. INS*, 564 F.2d 417, 429 (D.C. Cir. 1977). In turn, DOL has the authority to make the two determinations listed in section 212(a)(14). *Id.* at 423. The necessary result of these two grants of authority is that section 212(a)(14) determinations are not subject to review by INS absent fraud or willful

misrepresentation, but all matters relating to preference classification eligibility not expressly delegated to DOL remain within INS' authority.

* * *

Given the language of the Act, the totality of the legislative history, and the agencies' own interpretations of their duties under the Act, we must conclude that Congress did not intend DOL to have primary authority to make any determinations other than the two stated in section 212(a)(14). If DOL is to analyze alien qualifications, it is for the purpose of "matching" them with those of corresponding United States workers so that it will then be "in a position to meet the requirement of the law," namely the section 212(a)(14) determinations.

Madany v. Smith, 696 F.2d 1008, 1012-1013 (D.C. Cir. 1983).

The AAO is bound by the Act, agency regulations, precedent decisions of the agency and published decisions from the Circuit Court of Appeals from whatever circuit that the action arose. See *N.L.R.B. v. Ashkenazy Property Management Corp.*, 817 F.2d 74 (9th Cir. 1987)(administrative agencies are not free to refuse to follow precedent in cases originating within the circuit); *R.L. Inv. Ltd. Partners v. INS*, 86 F. Supp. 2d 1014, 1022 (D. Haw. 2000), *aff'd* 273 F.3d 874 (9th Cir. 2001)(unpublished agency decisions and agency legal memoranda are not binding under the APA, even when they are published in private publications or widely circulated). Even CIS internal memoranda do not establish judicially enforceable rights. See *Loa-Herrera v. Trominski*, 231 F.3d 984, 989 (5th Cir. 2000)(An agency's internal guidelines "neither confer upon [plaintiffs] substantive rights nor provide procedures upon which [they] may rely.")

A United States baccalaureate degree is generally found to require four years of education. *Matter of Shah*, 17 I&N Dec. 244 (Reg. Comm. 1977). The Joint Explanatory Statement of the Committee of Conference provides that "[in] considering equivalency in category 2 advanced degrees, it is anticipated that the alien must have a bachelor's degree with at least five years progressive experience in the professions." H.R. Conf. Rep. No. 955, 101st Cong., 2nd Sess. 1990, 1990 U.S.C.C.A.N. 6784, 1990 WL 201613 at *6786 (October 26, 1990). At the time of enactment in 1990, it had been almost thirteen years since *Matter of Shah*. Congress is presumed to have intended a four-year degree when it stated that an alien "must have a bachelor's degree" when considering equivalency for second preference immigrant visas. We must assume that Congress was aware of the agency's previous treatment of a "bachelor's degree" under the Act when the new classification was enacted and did not intend to alter the agency's interpretation of that term. *Lujan-Armendariz v. INS*, 222 F.3d 728, 748 (9th Cir. 2000) *citing Lorillard v. Pons*, 434 U.S. 575, 580 (1978)(Congress is presumed to be aware of administrative and judicial interpretations).

In 1991, when the final rule for 8 C.F.R. § 204.5 was published in the Federal Register, the Immigration and Naturalization Service (the Service), responded to criticism that the regulation required an alien to have a bachelor's degree as a minimum and that the regulation did not allow for the substitution of experience for education. After reviewing section 121 of the Immigration Act of

1990, Pub. L. 101-649 (1990), and the Joint Explanatory Statement of the Committee of Conference, the Service specifically noted that both the Act and the legislative history indicate that an alien must have at least a bachelor's degree:

The Act states that, in order to qualify under the second classification, alien members of the professions must hold "advanced degrees or their equivalent." As the legislative history . . . indicates, the equivalent of an advanced degree is "a bachelor's degree with at least five years progressive experience in the professions." Because neither the Act nor its legislative history indicates that bachelor's or advanced degrees must be United States degrees, the Service will recognize foreign equivalent degrees. But both the Act and its legislative history make clear that, in order to qualify as a professional under the third classification or to have experience equating to an advanced degree under the second, *an alien must have at least a bachelor's degree.*

56 Fed. Reg. 60897, 60900 (November 29, 1991)(emphasis added).

There is no provision in the statute or the regulations that would allow a beneficiary to qualify under section 203(b)(2) of the Act with anything less than a full baccalaureate degree. More specifically, a three-year bachelor's degree will not be considered to be the "foreign equivalent degree" to a United States baccalaureate degree. *Matter of Shah*, 17 I&N Dec. at 244. Where the analysis of the beneficiary's credentials relies on work experience alone *or a combination of multiple lesser degrees*, the result is the "equivalent" of a bachelor's degree rather than a "foreign equivalent degree." In order to have experience and education equating to an advanced degree under section 203(b)(2) of the Act, the beneficiary must have a single degree that is the "foreign equivalent degree" to a United States baccalaureate degree.

Thus, in order to have experience and education equating to an advanced degree under section 203(b)(2) of the Act, the beneficiary must have a single degree that is the "foreign equivalent degree" to a United States baccalaureate degree. As noted in the federal register, persons who claim to qualify for an immigrant visa by virtue of education or experience equating to bachelor's degree will qualify for a visa pursuant to section 203(b)(3)(A)(i) of the Act as a skilled worker with more than two years of training and experience.

The petitioner submitted a certificate from Andhra Pradesh Hyderabad confirming the beneficiary's completion of the "3-Year full-time Diploma Course of Study at C.R. Polytechnic Chilakaluripeta." The petitioner also submitted the beneficiary's Degree of Bachelor of Technology (Electronics and Communications) from Nagarjuna University. The period of study listed on the transcript from Nagarjuna University is August 1992 to March 1995. Thus, this second degree also involved a three-year period of study.

The petitioner submitted an evaluation from Education Evaluators International, Inc. The evaluation indicates that the diploma was a three-year program and then discusses the degree from Nagarjuna University as follows: "[The beneficiary] completed the four year full time program (three years after the Diploma in Engineering) and earned the Bachelor of Technology in Electronics and

Communications Engineering.” The evaluation concludes that all of the beneficiary’s “studies are equivalent in level and purpose to a Bachelor of Science in Engineering with a concentration in Communications Engineering awarded by regionally accredited colleges and universities in the United States.”

The evaluation is ambiguous as to whether the program at Nagarjuna University is normally a three-year program that the evaluator considers equivalent to a four-year program given the beneficiary’s previous diploma or normally a four-year program that the beneficiary was able to complete in three years because of his previous diploma. While we recognize that an institution that awards four-year degrees might issue such a degree after only three years of coursework if the student has prior higher education, without clarification on this issue, we cannot determine whether the degree from Nagarjuna University, by itself, is a foreign equivalent degree to a U.S. baccalaureate. As stated above, we will not consider multiple lesser degrees as a foreign equivalent degree.

Because the petitioner has not established that the beneficiary has a “United States baccalaureate degree or a foreign equivalent degree,” the petitioner has not established that the beneficiary qualifies for preference visa classification under section 203(b)(2) of the Act as he does not have the minimum level of education required for the equivalent of an advanced degree.

Qualifications for the Job Offered

Relying in part on *Madany*, 696 F.2d at 1008, the Ninth Circuit stated:

[I]t appears that the DOL is responsible only for determining the availability of suitable American workers for a job and the impact of alien employment upon the domestic labor market. It does not appear that the DOL’s role extends to determining if the alien is qualified for the job for which he seeks sixth preference status. That determination appears to be delegated to the INS under section 204(b), 8 U.S.C. § 1154(b), as one of the determinations incident to the INS’s decision whether the alien is entitled to sixth preference status.

K.R.K. Irvine, Inc. v. Landon, 699 F.2d 1006, 1008 (9th Cir. 1983). The court relied on an amicus brief from DOL that stated the following:

The labor certification made by the Secretary of Labor ... pursuant to section 212(a)(14) of the ... [Act] ... is binding as to the findings of whether there are able, willing, qualified, and available United States workers for the job offered to the alien, and whether employment of the alien under the terms set by the employer would adversely affect the wages and working conditions of similarly employed United States workers. *The labor certification in no way indicates that the alien offered the certified job opportunity is qualified (or not qualified) to perform the duties of that job.*

(Emphasis added.) *Id.* at 1009. The Ninth Circuit, citing *K.R.K. Irvine, Inc.*, 699 F.2d at 1006, revisited this issue, stating:

The Department of Labor (“DOL”) must certify that insufficient domestic workers are available to perform the job and that the alien’s performance of the job will not adversely affect the wages and working conditions of similarly employed domestic workers. *Id.* § 212(a)(14), 8 U.S.C. § 1182(a)(14). The INS then makes its own determination of the alien’s entitlement to sixth preference status. *Id.* § 204(b), 8 U.S.C. § 1154(b). See generally *K.R.K. Irvine, Inc. v. Landon*, 699 F.2d 1006, 1008 9th Cir.1983).

The INS, therefore, may make a de novo determination of whether the alien is in fact qualified to fill the certified job offer.

Tongatapu Woodcraft Hawaii, Ltd. v. Feldman, 736 F. 2d 1305, 1309 (9th Cir. 1984).

The key to determining the job qualifications is found on ETA Form 9089 Part H. This section of the application for alien labor certification, “Job Opportunity Information,” describes the terms and conditions of the job offered. It is important that the ETA Form 9089 be read as a whole.

In this matter, Part H, line 4, of the labor certification reflects that a Bachelor’s degree is the minimum level of education required. Line 8 reflects that no combination of education or experience is acceptable in the alternative. Line 9 reflects that a foreign educational equivalent is acceptable.

Moreover, to determine whether a beneficiary is eligible for a preference immigrant visa, CIS must ascertain whether the alien is, in fact, qualified for the certified job. CIS will not accept a degree equivalency or an unrelated degree when a labor certification plainly and expressly requires a candidate with a specific degree. In evaluating the beneficiary’s qualifications, CIS must look to the job offer portion of the labor certification to determine the required qualifications for the position. CIS may not ignore a term of the labor certification, nor may it impose additional requirements. See *Matter of Silver Dragon Chinese Restaurant*, 19 I&N Dec. 401, 406 (Comm. 1986). See also, *Madany*, 696 F.2d at 1008; *K.R.K. Irvine, Inc.*, 699 F.2d at 1006; *Stewart Infra-Red Commissary of Massachusetts, Inc. v. Coomey*, 661 F.2d 1 (1st Cir. 1981).

Finally, where the job requirements in a labor certification are not otherwise unambiguously prescribed, e.g., by professional regulation, CIS must examine “the language of the labor certification job requirements” in order to determine what the petition beneficiary must demonstrate to be found qualified for the position. *Madany*, 696 F.2d at 1015. The only rational manner by which CIS can be expected to interpret the meaning of terms used to describe the requirements of a job in a labor certification is to “examine the certified job offer *exactly* as it is completed by the prospective employer.” *Rosedale Linden Park Company v. Smith*, 595 F. Supp. 829, 833 (D.D.C. 1984)(emphasis added). CIS’s interpretation of the job’s requirements, as stated on the labor certification must involve “reading and applying *the plain language* of the [labor certification

application form].” *Id.* at 834 (emphasis added). CIS cannot and should not reasonably be expected to look beyond the plain language of the labor certification that DOL has formally issued or otherwise attempt to divine the employer’s intentions through some sort of reverse engineering of the labor certification.

As discussed above, the evaluation is ambiguous as to whether the beneficiary’s degree from Nagarjuna University is a foreign equivalent degree to a U.S. baccalaureate. Without further information regarding the normal **program** for this degree, we cannot conclude that the beneficiary has the education required on the labor certification.

The petitioner has not established that the beneficiary has “United States baccalaureate degree or a foreign equivalent degree,” and, thus, that he qualifies for preference visa classification under section 203(b)(2) of the Act. In addition, the petitioner has not established that the beneficiary meets the job requirements on the labor certification.

For the above stated reasons, considered both in sum and as separate grounds for denial, the petition may not be approved.

The burden of proof in these proceedings rests solely with the petitioner. Section 291 of the Act, 8 U.S.C. § 1361. The petitioner has not met that burden.

ORDER: The appeal is dismissed.